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An Essay on the Bilious Fever as it has presented itself within the last three or four years in a Southeastern district of Virginia.

By

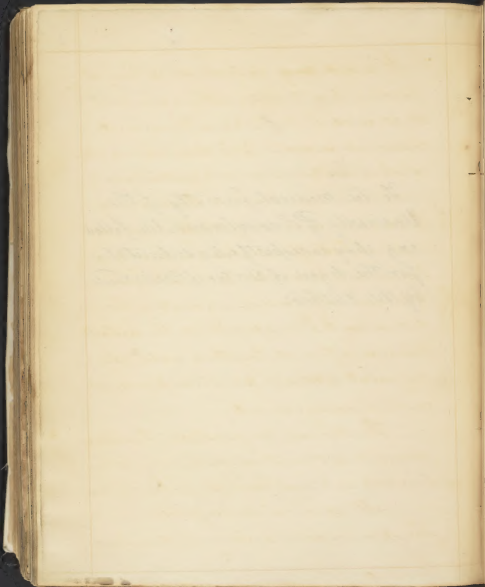
William Briggs
of
Virginia

1875
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The 1st day of the month
has been a day of great
interest to the public in
general as a whole.

William Lloyd
Tanner

To the Medical faculty of the
University of Pennsylvania the follow-
ing essay is respectfully submitted
for the degree of Doctor of Medicine
by the Author.



It is not ~~my~~ intention in the following essay to enter into any detailed account of the Bilious Fever, as it commonly presents itself here and in other parts of our country, or to undertake to add any thing to what has already been said on the subject by medical writers: but after making a few preliminary remarks, merely to give a general and concise account of the disease as it has appeared in the district before mentioned, together with the different modes of practice pursued in its management.

The disease in question has been marked by symptoms unusually malignant and has been the subject of considerable medical discussion. The opinions entertained as to its nature

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have been very diversified, and consequent-
ly different modes of practice advoca-
ted.

The disease under consideration is
evidently only a variety of the ordinary bil-
ious fever of our climate, to which have
been superadded symptoms of a much
more formidable character, corresponding
in its general characteristics, with the
cold cases of yellow fever, described by our
distinguished countryman Dr. Rust
also ~~with~~ the yellow fever of St. Peter
described by Dr. Cartwright of that place
under the descriptive character of the
atopic form of fever, and with the Ty-
phus tertius of the West Indies. It al-
so bears some resemblance to the con-
gestive form of fever, treated of by Dr. Arm-
strong in his very able work on Typhus fever.

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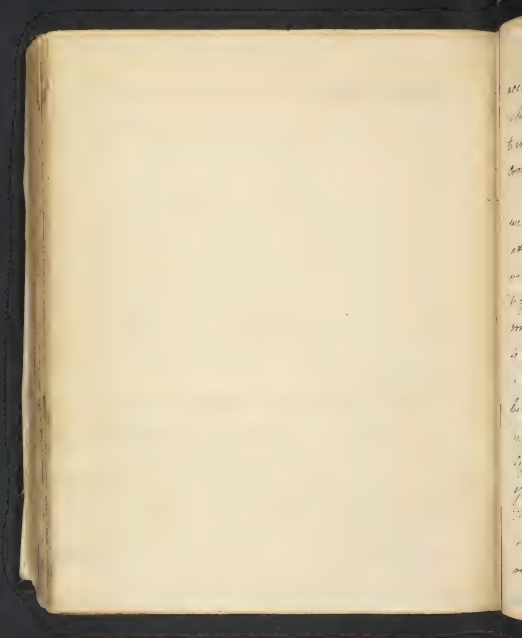
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Previously to entering on the immediate history of this disease, I would observe, that the weather within the last three or four years, has been intensely warm, during the summer and autumnal months, particularly during the last year, when the disease prevailed so much more generally, than at any time previously.

There was also an unusual quantity of rain during the winter and spring months of the same year. — It may be well to remark also that the section of country, in which this peculiar form of disease prevails, is low and abounds in miasmatic situations, such as swamps, millponds &c. —

In the commencement the disease assumes the symptoms which characterize the common bilious fever, with some modification.

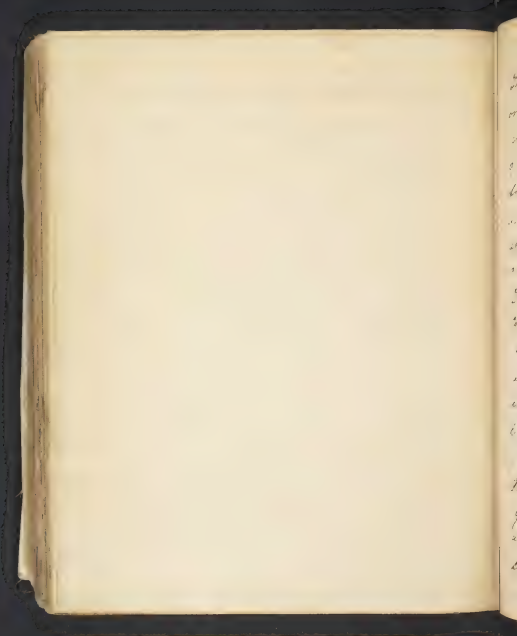
It is ushered in with a chill, which is followed by considerable fever, accompanied by sick stomach & headache. The pulse is frequent though not perhaps at the same degree of strength and fullness as in ordinary bilious cases. The tongue is furred with a white appearance.

In the course of four, five or six days and sometimes later after the complaint discovers itself symptoms of a more formidable character supervene. — Hard and symptoms of prostration come on rapidly; the extremities become cold without any sense of a chill on the part of the patient.



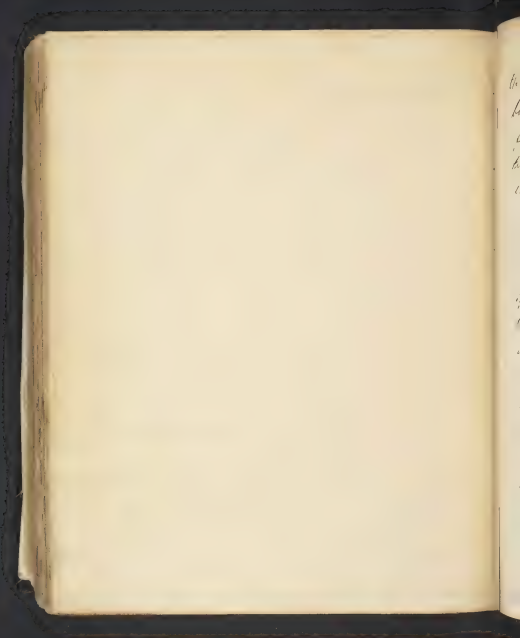
accompanied with a cold perspiration while at the same time the body was tremely hot to the touch and the patient complained of intolerable heat. —

The pulse now becomes very quick and weak, and sometimes sweat perspiration at the wrist — In the foregoing symptoms were also added in many cases, a disordered respiration, attended with a hoarse rattling, a marked determination to the head, indicated by diarrhoea, or a comatose state, and pain occasional by in different other parts of the body, more particularly about the right side of the back and in the lower part of the abdomen, indicating a congestion in some of the abdominal vessels. The respiration was frequently hurried and uneasy.



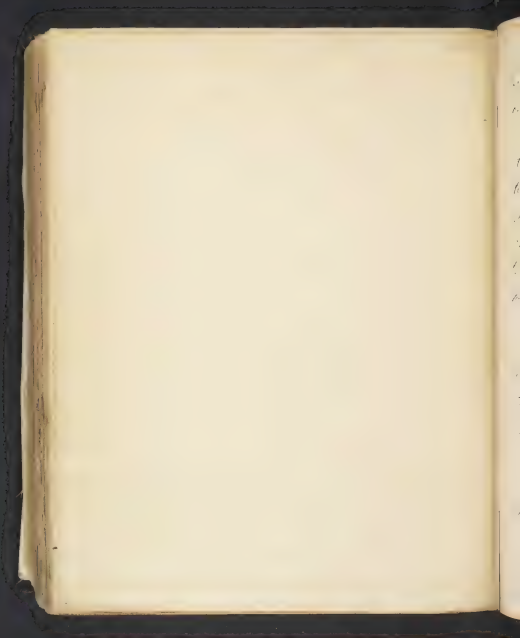
The tongue at this time feels as a yellow
or brown incrustation with the sides
irregular and of a green or ash
grey colour. - Sometimes also
frequently of a green or orange colour,
and sometimes presents a very dark
appearance, approaching to what is
called the black vomit by writers.
The skin is frequently of a yellow
colour. -

The account given in some is a gener-
al outline of the symptoms which have
our evidence in their general character
but are distinguished by different
degrees of violence. In some
In some instances the symptoms of an
ague and pneumonia are slight
and easily subdued; in other in-
stances, however, all these increase



that the patient although apparently labouring under little disease, at their first accession, would in the course of two or three hours, sometimes be found in intense motion.

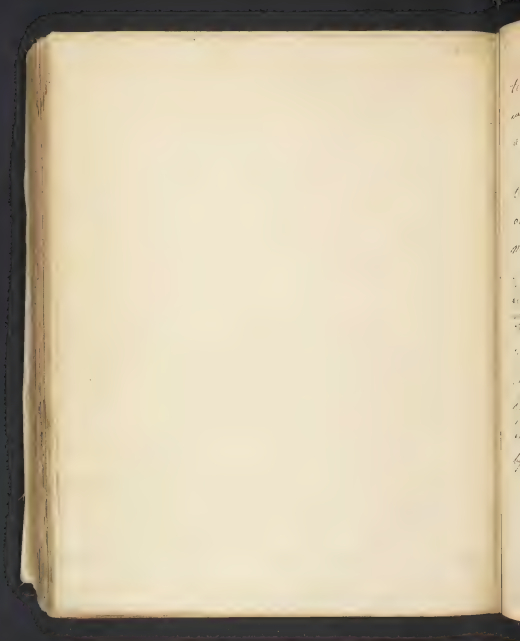
It is the cause of the disease there is room for some diversity of opinion and speculation. It is not to mention solely the usual causes or bidious humours such as miasmata from malarious situations. For during the existence of the same local causes, with very little variation, for a number of years preceding the commencement of this complaint, only the common bilious affections prevailed. We are therefore under the necessity of recurring to some other cause, and as the more probable, we should see



Under the appellation "agency of elements" are
 an inexpressible state of the imagination.

The symptoms of the disease are
 fever, which characterizes this disease, seem
 to distinguish it from the ordinary form
 of fever, where at the same time, the system
 remains, or the fever is supposed, it is
 to speak it as a species of fever & range
 ment.

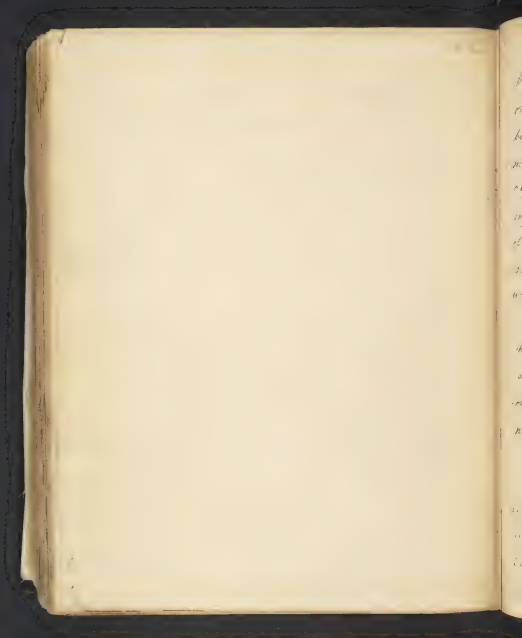
As to the degree in this disease
 it may be formed from observing the state
 of the particular symptoms. When the fever
 is extreme and continually continues,
 without changing the state of the system much
 more than the ordinary state of the
 fever, the symptoms are, as yet, the most
 with general prostration. But when
 the gastric symptoms and prostration
 to the system are separated, in the case



time kind of acids or acids in use of medicines
we may generally suspect a morbi-
dity disease.

It may be gathered from the above that
this is a disease of the liver in relation
as a peculiar form of bilious derange-
ment, connected with a morbid state
of the system, the effect of the positive
acid derangement.

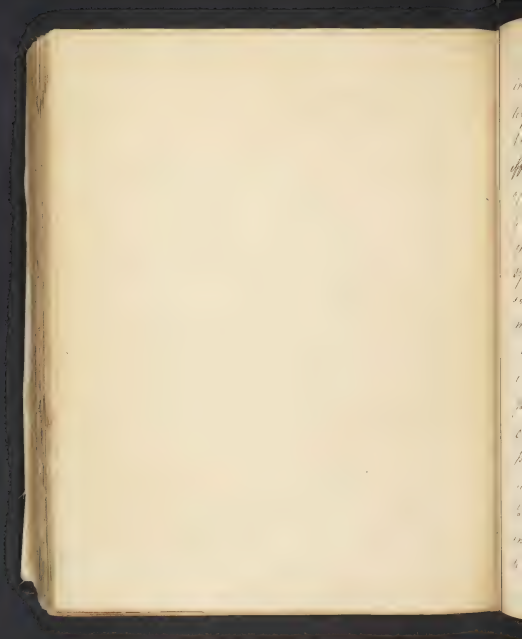
That in a few persons, the previous
state of the liver is often found to be
very bad in a few cases, we cannot learn
by direct examination, but by a few cases
inferred from the above, we can suspect
by observation.



In the treatment of this disease as we learn
 abroad, very different medical practice have
 been pursued by private hands. But the
 most rational and logical, the most suc-
 cessful is that derived from the treat-
 ing associations, in brief, first the removal
 of the febrile symptoms, second, and secondly
 the production of a reaction in the system
 with a view of restoring the organization. —

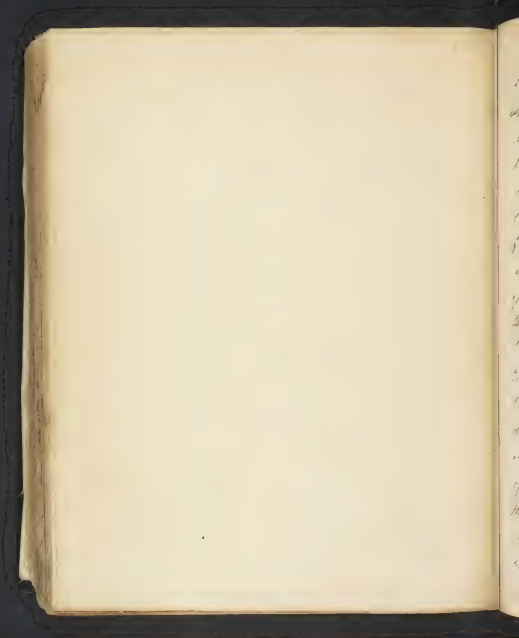
There are the leading indications above
 mentioned, there are commonly other acci-
 dental and minor circumstances requir-
 ing particular attention, we will be
 noticed hereafter —

To accomplish the first indication, viz
 remove the urgent febrile symptoms, we use
 at our bedside more actively combined in,
 the first several of morning unsuccessful



ingly given in divided doses, viz. the quan-
tity of three or four grains every two or three
hours so as to produce a gradual though
effectual operation, repeating the medicine
after the exhibition of several doses the
quantities to be repeated by the strength
of the patient and the severity of the
symptoms by some gentle purgatives such
as the Stearns Purgine, together with the em-
malin.

When a complete, though gradual op-
eration was procured in this way, the
pains though weak at first, became
stronger, violent at the systolic inter-
space, and the more urgent symptoms
were relieved. It was then necessary
to continue the mercurial purgations
in the same way, only in a smaller quan-
tity, until the bitious evacuations, &c.

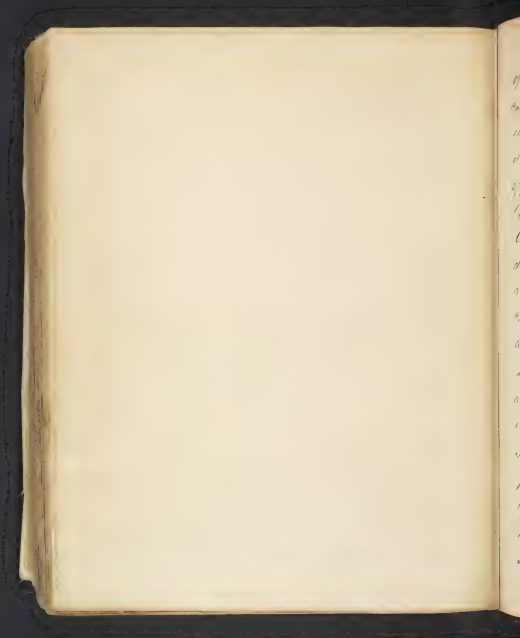


seemed a more natural appearance
 where the urgent symptoms were much
 relieved. After which the well regu-
 lated use of metallic purgatives such
 as the sulphate of Magnesia alone or
 in combination with Senega, were suf-
 ficient, & indeed, the cure was accomplished.

In some very violent cases it was found
 expedient to urge the use of the mercury
 to the extent of a moderate salivation.

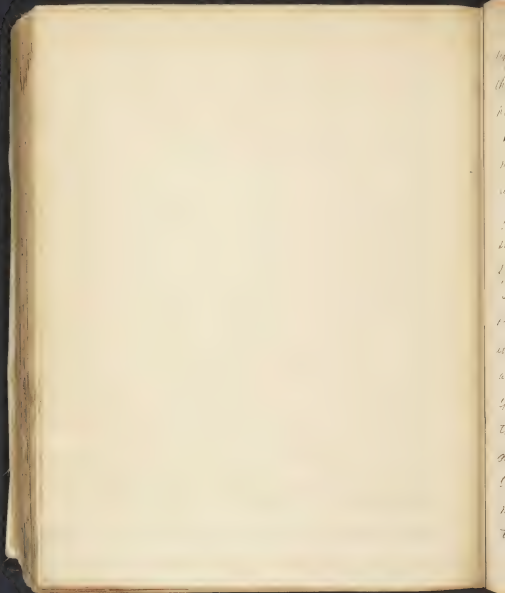
Before the system was very much pre-
 tended it was common to combine two or
 three grains of Camphor, with each
 dose of Calomel.

Some practitioners are doubling the virus
 of Dr. Cartwright's affords in relation to the
 modus operandi of mercury, have given
 Salivation doses of Iodine or of Potash grains
 in combination with small portions of



opium, three or four times in the course of the twenty four hours, and with the most surprising results, as that report. I have myself seen the most beneficial effects, result from the use of a combination of Calomel and Dover's powder.

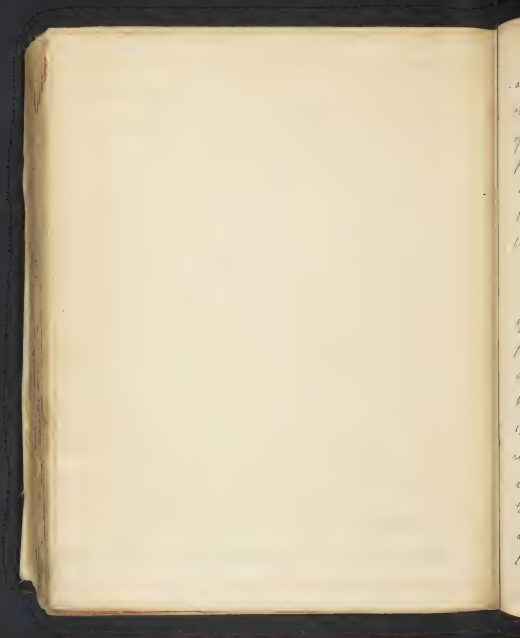
With a view of answering the second indication or that of bringing about a reaction of the system, and relieving the congestion, in addition to the remedies already enumerated, which had a considerable effect in that way, as already observed, other auxiliary remedies were sometimes indispensably necessary. The more prominent resources for this purpose, consisted in the application of blisters to different parts of the body more particularly to the chest and anus, and sometimes to the extremities, stimu-



ing embrocations &c. the warm bath and the application of hot liniments. The only have been reported to be beneficial.

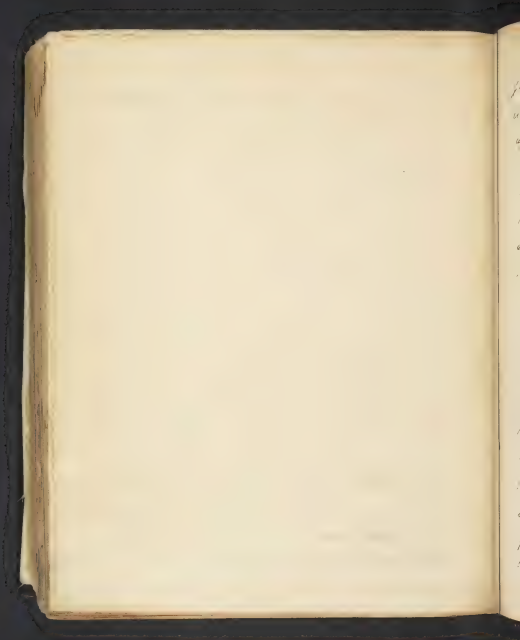
Other treatments, however, beneficial it may have been in ordinary febrile cases, when there was a full, often sanguine, yet in the disease under consideration, so prostrated were the energies of the system that it was entirely inadmissible.

The remedy has been advocated by some on the principle that its use gradually unloads the system without producing a reaction and without any returning the co-existent symptoms. Although the theory in regard to its mode of operation may be specious and the practice in some peculiarly oppressed states of the system might answer, if directed with caution and discrimination, yet as a gener-



- al rule, I am confident. from an attentive observation of the symptoms and the effect of remedies that the practice would prove highly delirious.

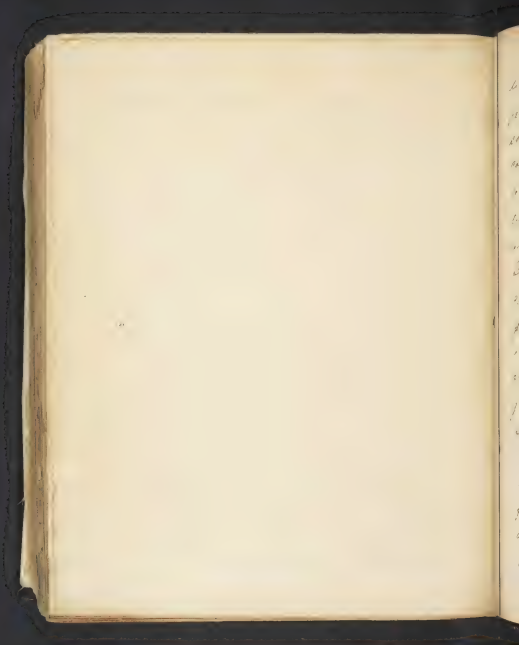
The observations just made in relation to venesection, do not apply equally to topical bloodletting, though few practitioners have ventured ^{even} to abstract blood in this way. I have no doubt but that the abstraction of blood from the back of the neck or temples, by cups or leeches (the quantity to be determined by the effect produced) would have a fine effect in obviating or removing the determination to the brain and in relieving the pain and delirium consequent thereon. In the same way the topical abstraction of blood from the chest and pectoral regions would relieve the pain and congestion of the sub



parent organs and should always be resorted to, in every case, previous to the application of blisters to those parts.

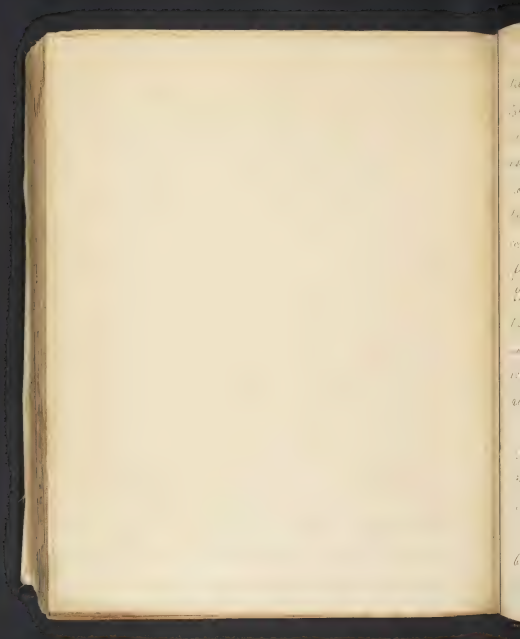
As to the use of medicines, the observations just made in relation to the improper use of water in inflammation of the cutaneous vessels are equally applicable. There is much to be said in this relation, and to persons of a delicate constitution, empoisoning is dangerous, & when used must be considered with the greatest circumspection & caution.

We are sometimes, especially by the physicians, who have been paid attention to, but it would seem that in too particular a case they are influenced more than ought to be by the warmer nature of the atmosphere in some cases to this & their very general and from having formed incorrect opinions as to the nature of the disease, & the



deduced as incorrect practice. Its answer to the
purpose of stimulation, however, was given by
some to the amount of several grains in the
course of the twenty-four hours along with
a variety of other stimulant and tonics in
the same space of time to a considerable
amount, such as the anaphor, Cark &c.
This practice in my opinion was only
parentated to add fuel to the fire, and so
far from relieving the debility, tended
only to increase the restlessness and anxiety
of the patient; and in this manner the emer-
gency of the system.

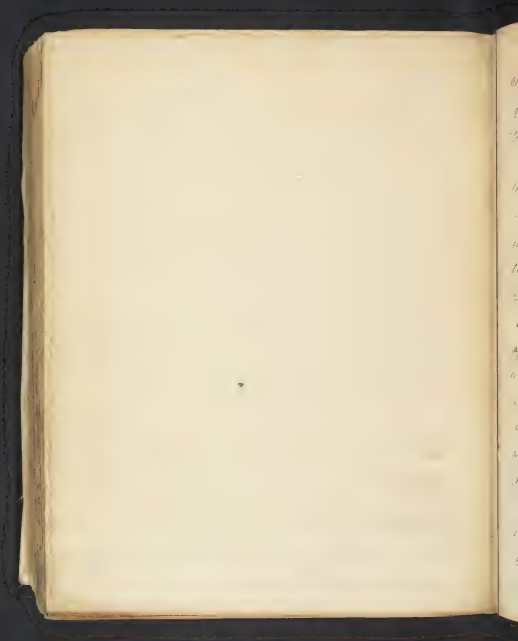
It moreover excites a gross departure from
principles established, our sense the time
of the stimulus is indicated was separated
from the process, an arguement of error
and incongruity, and places them on a basis
of occasional highly liberal and not



trouled. - The advantage of this practice is
 the instance where the patients recovered un-
 der the former, & a secondary effect in
 use of these remedies. It will be found, it
 is not true that the unexcited
 the cure. The mace root, ergo, is not the
 which applied in medicine is sometimes per-
 fectly useless and dangerous.

The recovery of patients in these under-
 stands, none of the most common in medicine
 can, be attributed, not to the action of the
 it, but to the recuperative efforts of nature,
 alone which accomplish^{ed} the cure.

I mentioned that besides the independent
 cations, there were general ones associated
 as nervous symptoms, usually a hysterical
 condition - These were nervous spasms or
 nervous convulsions, and a repetition of the



chills, the occasion of which was not unfrequently, associated with alarming symptoms.

To relieve the nausea or bilious vomiting, the use of the usual ante-emetic medicines were resorted to, such as equal parts of lime water and new milk - opium pill, and particularly the application of a blister to the region of the stomach.

In the event of a repetition of the chills after first clearing the stomach, when there was a fair remission, approximating to an intermission, the sulphate of Quinine acted like a charm in checking the chill and arresting the further progress of the disease.

It may be remarked, in conclusion, that when the proper remedies had been successfully employed, that convalescence

was uncommonly rapid in this disease.

